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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /103 W
----------018807 221104Z /10
P 220855Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2499
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUBUMBASHI 0740

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: EAID,EMIN,IBRD, CG
SUBJECT: FUTURE OF GCM EXPATRIAT STAFF AND IBRD
MEETING OF JUNE 26,1978

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO GEMCAMINES SOURCES PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAS REAFFIRMED HIS DECISION TO DISMISS ALL EVACUATED EX PATRIATE PERSONNEL FROM KOLWEZI. APPARENTLY HE HOPES TO REPLACE THEM WITH FRENCH TECHNICIANS. SENIOR BELGIAN AND FRENCH EXPATRIATES OPPOSE PLAN AND HAVE STALLED LETTERS. THEY HOPE THAT IBRD AT MEETING IN PARIS ON JUNE 26 WILL BECOME AWARE OF SITUATION AND FORCE A CHANGE IN THE PLAN. END SUMMARY

2. DURING HIS VISIT TO SHABA IN EARLY JUNE, PRESIDENT MOBUTU ISSUED STATEMENT THAT THERE HAD BEEN TOO MANY BEL GIAN EXPATRIATES WORKING IN KOLWEZI AND ASKED DELEGATE GENERAL UMBA KYAMITALA TO TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE NUMBER. UMBA FLEW TO PARIS THE WEEKEND OF JUNE 4 WHERE ACCORDING TO GECAMINES EXPATRIATE STAFF, HE DISCUSSED WITH FRENCH COOPERATION BUREAU THE POSSIBILITY OF RECRUTING
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FRENCH TECHNICIANS TO REPLACE BELGIANS. LETTERS WERE ALSO PREPARED, TERMINATING EMPLOYMENT OF ALL EVACUATED KOLWEZI EXPATRIATES. LETTERS WERE LEFT AT BRUSSELS OFFICE OF SOCIETE GENERAL DE MINERAIS(SGM) WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION. GCM AND SGM EXPATRIATES IN LUBUMBASHI OPPOSED SENDING LETTERS BECAUSE OF NEED TO RESTAFF KOLWEZI, LIKELY

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LAWSUITS, AND EFFECTS OF SUCH LETTERS ON MORALE OF
EXPATRIATES IN OTHER MINING TOWNS. EXPATRIATE STAFF
INSISTED THAT LETTERS BE HELD IN BRUSSELS UNTIL UMBA
COULD REAFFIRM THE PRESIDENTS DECISION. COMMON VIEW
AMONG EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL IS THAT ISSUE IS INTENDED
SOLELY TO DIVIDE BRUSSELS AND PARIS ON FUTURE
ZAIRIAN ISSUES

3. UMBA RETURNED TO KINSHASA OVER WEEKEND OF JUNE 17
WHERE HE AGAIN MET WITH MOBUTU TO PRESENT VIEWS OF
EXPATRIATES. MOBUTU APPARENTLY REFUSED TO CHANGE HIS
MIND AND ORDERED THAT THE LETTERS BE SENT. WHEELS
HAVE BEGUN ROLLING TO ISSUE LETTERS AT SGM IN BRUSSELS
BUT LETTERS WILL PROBABLY BE STALLED UNTIL AFTER IBRD
MEETING ON JUNE 26. PURPOSE OF IBRD MEETING IS TO
REVIEW P-2 EXPANSION PROGRAM IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS
BUT ALL MANNER OF GCM OPERATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED.
BECAUSE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AGREENT BETWEEN SGM
AND GCM REGARDING EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL DISMISSAL
OF ALL EVACUATED KOLWEZI EXPATRIATES IS EXPECTED TO HAVE
SERIOUS IMPACT ON IBRD WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE SUPPORT
OF P-2 EXPANSION PROJECT

4. GECAMINES DELEGATION TO PARIS MEETING WILL BE LED
BY UMBA AND FINANCIAL DIRECTOR NORBERT ROCHER, WHO IS
HIGHEST RANKING FRENCH CITIZEN IN COMPANY. ROCHER AND
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OTHER EXPATRIATES BELIEVE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT IBRD BE
MADE AWARE OF EMPLOYMENT SITUATION. UNLESS FORMALLY
FORBIDDEN FROM RAISING ISSUE HE WILL EITHER CONVINCE UMBA
TO DISCUSS PROBLEM OR BRING IT UP HIMSELF. GECAMINES
EXPATRIATES CONSIDERED ASKING CONSULATE TO PASS ISSUE TO
IBRD VIA US CHANNELS, BUT DECIDED THERE WERE TOO
MANY POTENTIAL RISKS. AT PRESENT THEY THINK THAT BEST
STRATEGY IS TO PASS WORD INFORMALLY THROUGH SGM
IN BRUSSELS TO IBRD.

5. COMMENT: GECAMINES PERSONNEL AT KOLWEZI INCLUDED
449 EXPATRIATES, OF WHOM THERE WERE 227 BELGIANS AND 104
FRENCH. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR AN OUTSIDER TO ASSESS THE
PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS FOR A MINING COMPANY LIKE GECAMINES,
BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT KOLWEZI WAS OVERSTAFFED WITH
EXPATRIATES. WHEN PRESIDENT MOBUTU MADE HIS COMMENT
ABOUT TOO MANY BELGIANS AT KOLWEZI HE WAS PROBABLY NOT
AWARE THAT NEARLY 25 PC OF THE KOLWEZI EXPATRIATES WERE
FRENCH. ISSUE AT PRESENT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE WHETHER
THERE WERE TOO MANY EXPATRIATES AT KOLWEZI OR WHETHER
FRENCH OR BELGIANS SHOULD PREDOMINATE BUT BASIC
RESTAFFING OF KOLWEI. HORROR OF EVENTS WILL NOT

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QUICKLY BE FORGOTTEN EITHER BY FORMER RESIDENTS OR OUTSIDERS WHO MIGHT CONSIDER SHABA AS A HOME. RECRUITMENT FOR KOLWEZI WILL BE DIFFICULT UNDER BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES. FEW LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT MANY TECHNICIANS OF ANY NATIONALITY WILL BE RECRUITED IF PRESIDENT MOBUTU SUCCEEEDS IN FORCING MASSIVE LAY-OFF OF FORMER KOLWEZI STAFF.

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